DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 382 712 UD 030 396

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TITLE	The American Civic Culture and an Inclusivist Immigration Policy.
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	17p.; Chapter 17 in the "Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education," p293-309. See UD 030 379.
AVAILABLE FROM	Individual chapters not available separately.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Civics; Civil Rights; *Cultural Pluralism; *Culture; Democracy; *Ethnic Groups; *Immigrants; Immigration; Minority Groups; Multicultural Education; *Public Policy; Racial Differences; *Social Discrimination; United States History
IDENTIFIERS	Naturalization Programs

ABSTRACT

The evolution of an inclusivist immigration and naturalization policy in the United States is described. The policy, implicit in the founding myth of the United States as a haven for all, has been challenged repeatedly by ideas of national membership, and is only possible because of the American principles of universal rights. The founding ideals of the country generally accepted Europeans regardless of nationality in spite of the restrictions imposed in a few of the fledgling states. This inclusivist tradition was, however, never intended for people of color. An exclusivist tradition fed by the xenophobia of the post-World War I era was broadened to put immigration on a racist basis in the 1920s. The civil rights revolution put a spotlight on that racism and resulted in a welcome given immigrants in the 1970s and 1980s that was fundamentally different from that of earlier years because Americans were beginning to value ethnic diversity. While social critics may claim that racism has gotten worse since the death of John F. Kennedy, a review of immigration policy does not support this contention. The principles of civic culture and voluntary pluralism, while still under attack, have gained the ascendancy. (Contains 90 references.) (SLD)

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